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MONS AND COLLIS

The distinction between *mons* and *collis*, as applied to the hills of Rome, is well known. The *montes*—Aventinus, Palatinus, Capitolinus, Caelius, Esquilinus, including Oppius and Cispinus—were sharply distinguished from the hill on the northeast side of the city. This seems to have been called simply *collis* at first, and the adjectives Viminalis, Quirinalis, Salutaris, Mucialis, Latiaris, were afterward employed to denote its different parts. Books of reference state that this distinction was regularly observed, or at least no exceptions are noted. Compare Orelli *Onomasticon* II, p. 506: *proprie dicimus collem Quirinalem, collem Viminalem; contra montem Esquilinum, Palatinum, Aventinum, Caeleum, Oppium;* Gilbert *Topographie* I, p. 271; Jordan *Topographie* I. i, p. 179. Professor Tracy Peck has called my attention to three passages that seem at first sight to be exceptions to this rule, and there are a few others which may possibly be cited as evidence that *collis* and *mons* were sometimes interchangeable. These passages are the following:

(1) Cicero *De rep.* ii. 11: *ex omni parte arduis praeruptisque montibus (urbis) ut unus aditus qui esset inter Esquilinum Quirinalemque montem.*

(2) Florus i. 7 (13). 16: *Fabium . . . ab area dimisit qui sollemne sacrum in Quirinali monte conficeret.*

(3) Eutropius i. 7 (6): *hic (Servius Tullius) quoque Sabinos subegit, montes tres Quirinalem Viminalem Esquilinum urbi adiecit.*

(4) Claud. *De bell. Gild.* 117, 118:

tuque (Cybebe) o si sponte peraltum
vecta Palatinis mutasti collibus Idam.

(5) *Id. De sext. cons. Hon.* 39–41:

non alium certe decuit rectoribus orbis
esse larem, nulloque magis se colle potestas
aestimat et summi sentit fastigia iuris.

(6) *Id. ibid.* 535, 536:

erexit subitas turres cunctosque coegit
septem continuo colles iuvenescere muro.

(7) *Id. ibid.* 543, 544:

omne Palatino quod pons a colle recedit
Mulvius.

These passages fall naturally into three groups, the first including (1) and (3). In (1) *montem* is seen at once to be justified by the presence of *montibus* just before, used in a general sense for the hills of Rome, and especially by the coupling of *Esquilinum* with *Quirinalem*. *Inter Esquilinum montem collemque Quirinalemque collem* would be both cumbrous and pedantic, while *inter Esquilinum Quirinalemque collem* would be open to the same objection on the score of irregularity as what Cicero actually wrote. One might, to be sure, maintain that *Esquilinum* is here a noun, and that *montem* is not to be understood as belonging to it at all, but it is very doubtful whether *Esquilinus* was ever used without a distinct

adjectival sense being attached to it, even if *mons* were not expressed. This, however, happened rarely, for *Esquiliae* was the proper substantive form. So in the passage from Eutropius it was the most natural thing in the world to employ the common term *montes* when speaking of three hills, the most important of which in the early period was the Esquiline. Here, too, an amplification like *colles Quirinalem Viminalemque et montem Esquilinum* would be wholly foreign to the style of the *Breviarium*. Neither of these passages contains any definite evidence in support of the theory that in the days of either Cicero or Eutropius *mons* and *collis* had become interchangeable.

The second group comprises (4), (5) and (6), where *collis* is used comprehensively of the hills of the city, but the fact that Claudian chose to write *collis* instead of *mons*, where it was necessary to use one or the other, is no evidence that earlier distinctions were breaking down. *Palatinis collibus* is indeed a striking invention of the poet, in the substitution of *Palatinis* for *urbis* as well as in the use of *collibus*, and for that very reason has no bearing on the question at issue.

There remain the two passages, (2) and (7), of the third group. Florus apparently did write *Quirinali monte*. This is his only mention of the Quirinal, and neither *Viminalis* nor *collis* occurs at all, so that we have no means of knowing whether he substituted *mons* for *collis* regularly or not. Claudian, on the other hand, uses *Palatinus mons* twice, *Palatinus* alone once, and finally *Palatino colle* in the passage cited. This usage, however, may easily be explained as in a sense a development of *Palatinis collibus*. Having once invented this combination, Claudian might easily have felt himself justified in going one step farther and writing *Palatino colle*, which would have appealed to him just because it was a combination so wholly unusual and therefore striking. This particular occurrence of *collis* applied to a *mons*, by a poet at the beginning of the fifth century, can have only infinitesimal value in this discussion.

The Florus passage remains as the only one that can be cited in support of the belief that the Quirinal, and presumably the Viminal, were sometimes called *montes*. It is true that a very little positive outweighs any amount of negative evidence, and it may perhaps be admitted that even Florus would not have written *mons Quirinalis* if he had never heard the expression, but in the face of so many instances of the regular usage and in view of the possibilities of error in transmission, it seems very hazardous to regard an isolated occurrence in a writer of the character and date of Florus as evidence that any exception to the ordinary rule was permitted in good usage. This position is strengthened by the absence, so far as I know, of such exceptions in the inscriptions, where they might naturally be looked for.